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E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/19/2017
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [EAID](#) [DO](#) [XL](#)
SUBJECT: DOMINICA: SKERRIT SUPPORTS DOLLAR DIPLOMACY IN
INDEPENDENCE DAY SPEECH

Classified By: A/DCM Clyde Howard for reason 1.4(d).

11. (C) SUMMARY: Prime Minister Roosevelt Skerrit thanked China, Venezuela, and Cuba in his Independence Day speech, citing specific assistance these countries have recently provided. Other thanks also went to the European Union, which has also provided substantial assistance. This speech is another example that Skerrit approaches foreign policy with pragmatism, basing Dominica's strongest relationship with those who promise large and visible donations. END SUMMARY.

THANKS TO VENEZUELA, CHINA, AND CUBA

12. (U) The climax of the Independence Day activities was Prime Minister Roosevelt Skerrit's speech at the National Parade. In it, Skerrit commented that, due to the generosity of China, Venezuela, Cuba, CARICOM, and the European Union, Dominica has greater flexibility in responding to natural crises, such as Hurricane Dean. He stated that grants from partners constitute 14 percent of Dominica's GDP. Specifically, Skerrit cited an ECD 12 million (USD 4.6 million) project Venezuela is funding to erect a sea wall and construct a reinforced concrete road between Soufriere and Scotts Head and an EU-funded tourism development program valued ECD 19 million (USD 7.3 million) over three years. He also asked the audience to stand and applaud China for the recently-opened, 8000-seat stadium in which the parade was taking place, gifted as part of a ECD 300 million (USD 115.4 million) investment package. The one mention of U.S. involvement was the introduction of a new American Eagle flight connecting Dominica to Puerto Rico. At the end, Skerrit added France, Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom, the Republic of Korea, Japan, the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States, and the Organization of American States.

COMMENT

13. (C) Skerrit's speech perfectly illustrated Dominica's foreign policy of friendships through dollar diplomacy. Recent USG assistance, such as the USD 25,000 provided through the Ambassador's emergency relief fund in the aftermath of Hurricane Dean and MLO donations of vehicles to the Dominican police force, seems to have made little impression compared to multi-million dollar projects by Venezuela and China. Given the country's continued reliance on heavy donor assistance and the devastation caused by Dean to the Ag sector and much of Dominica's transportation

infrastructure, this is hardly surprising. Moving forward, we will be highlighting June Conference Deliverables such as the upcoming USAID Caribbean Centers of Excellence for Teacher Training to strengthen relations between the United States and Dominica.

OURISMAN